

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

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R 270610Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2072

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MELBOURNE 0329

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: SEVEN-MAN DELEGATION LEAVES AUSTRALIA FOR MANILA TO
ADVISE ON MIGRANT FILIPINO WORKERS

REF: MELBOURNE 0158

1. A GOVERNMENT DELEGATION DEPARTED AUSTRALIA MARCH 26 FOR
MANILA IN CONNECTION WITH RECENTLY ANNOUNCED PLANS OF GOA TO
RECRUIT, AS EXPERIMENT, 35 FILIPINO WORKERS TO WORK FOR
LEYLAND AUTOMOBILE WORKS IN SYDNEY AREA.

2. DELEGATION IS TRIPARTITE AND MADE UP OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF TRADE UNIONS, INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT. DELEGATION HEAD IS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR, M. B. (MICK) KEOGH.

3. KEOGH EMPHASIZED FOR LABATT ON MARCH 22 THAT DELEGATION
WILL NOT PERSONALLY SELECT WORKERS BUT WILL SIMPLY ADVISE
PERMANENT AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS BASED IN MANILA
ON CRITERIA FOR SUCH SELECTION. HE EMPHASIZED DIFFICULTY IN
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FACE OF TRADE UNION OPPOSITION TO IMPORT OF POTENTIAL

COMPETITORS FOR AUSTRALIAN SKILLED WORKERS, CHIEFLY IN AREAS WITH EXISTING APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING COURSES. THIS TOPIC WAS DISCUSSED AT MEETING MARCH 15 BETWEEN ACTU OFFICIALS, PRESIDENT HAWKE AND SECRETARY SOUTER; AND PRIME MINISTER; MINISTER OF LABOR CAMERON AND IMMIGRATION MINISTER GRASSBY.

4. COMMENT: BASED ON CONVERSATION WITH KEOGH LABATT FEELS THAT DELEGATION IS UNEASY ABOUT OUTCOME OF POLITICALLY SENSITIVE MISSION. ASSISTANT SECRETARY KEOGH EVIDENTLY DOES NOT ENJOY RECENT COMMENTS MADE BY MINISTER LABOR CAMERON CRITICISING AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY AS ONE USING SWEATED LABOR AND REGRETTING EXPOSURE OF FILIPINO WORKERS TO SUB-STANDARD WORKING CONDITIONS. PUBLIC INDIGNATION BY AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY LEADERS REACTING FROM CAMERON'S STATEMENT WILL NOT MAKE KEOGH'S TASK EASIER. LABATT CONTINUES TO THINK, AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, THAT WHOLE CONCEPT WAS POLITICAL EXPEDIENT USED BY PRIME MINISTER IN EFFORT TO MOLLIFY NOISY LEFT-WING IN HIS OWN LABOR PARTY WHICH WAS DISPLEASED THAT HE HAD VISITED PHILIPPINES AND MET WITH ITS PRESIDENT MARCOS WHOM THEY CONSIDER A "FASCIST DICTATOR". 1973 FIGURES SHOW NORMAL IMMIGRATION INCLUDED 1.89 PERCENT FROM PHILIPPINES; UNDERLINES IDEA THAT SO-CALLED "EXPERIMENT" WAS REALLY POLITICAL EXERCISE AND NOT SINCERE EFFORT TO RELIEVE WORKFORCE PRESSURES.
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